



KEYS TO EFFECTIVE HEALTH PROMOTION

Key #17: Effective health communication



Health communication is important to all aspects of health promotion and preventive medicine and is relevant to:

- Healthcare provider-patient relationships
- An individual's exposure to, search for, and use of health information
- Effective counseling and patient education for behavior change
- Content of public health messages and community campaigns

Effective health communication should have these attributes:

- **Accuracy:** content is valid and error-free
- **Availability:** delivered or placed where the intended audience can access the information
- **Balance:** content presents benefits and risks of potential actions
- **Consistency:** content is locally consistent over time and is also consistent with information from other reliable sources
- **Evidence-based:** content and methods of delivery are based on relevant scientific evidence
- **Reach:** content gets to or is available to as many people as possible in the target population
- **Reliability:** content source is credible; content is kept up-to-date
- **Repetition:** delivery of/access to the content is continued over time, to reinforce the impact with the audience and to reach new members of the target population
- **Timeliness:** content is provided when the audience is most receptive to, or in need of, the specific information
- **Understandability:** reading, language levels, and format are appropriate for the specific audience (i.e., Soldiers, Family Members, Garrison leadership, etc.)

What the research says about health communication

- Health communication best supports health promotion when multiple communication methods are used to reach specific audiences.
- Effective health promotion and communication initiatives should reflect an audience-centered perspective, and reflect the preferred formats, contexts, and means of communication for the intended audience.

Material adapted from: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2010. 2nd ed. With Understanding and Improving Health and Objectives for Improving Health. 2 vols. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 2000.

<http://www.healthypeople.gov/document/HTML/Volume1/11HealthCom.htm>

To access the complete set of Keys to Effective Health Promotion, go to: <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/Population/keys.aspx>.

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